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GOP tax overhaul nears approval

Glitch forces second House vote; Maryland officials worry over possible effects

By John Fritze and Michael Dresser
The Baltimore Sun

WASHINGTON – Lawmakers were expected to give final approval today to a sweeping overhaul of the nation's tax laws despite deep opposition from Democrats and a last-minute hiccup that forced Republican supporters to delay their celebration.

The $1.5 trillion legislation, which would change the way millions of Marylanders file federal income taxes, would hand Donald J. Trump the first major legislative victory of his presidency while lowering taxes for millions of Americans.

Andy Harris

But as Congress was scheduling final votes, state lawmakers in Maryland and elsewhere were beginning to scrutinize the potential impact on their own budgets. Maryland officials increasingly recognized that the legislation may have an enormous effect on state taxes, which could make it a central issue in next year's General Assembly session.

"We're going to analyze the whole thing, and if there are people that are negatively impacted by it we're going to try to look at, are there things we can do at the state level to try to mitigate some of the problems it may have caused?" Republican Gov. Larry Hogan said Tuesday.

Underscoring the speed with which Republicans have moved the bill to meet the president's Christmas deadline, GOP leaders abruptly announced they would have to push their schedule back one day after the

See **TAXES,** *page 13*

KENNETH K. LAM/BALTIMORE SUN

Evening rush hour traffic on Interstate 695 northbound, left, toward the Interstate 70 interchange. Rebuilding the Interstate 695-Interstate 70 interchange is one of the projects n Gov. Larry Hogan's construction plan.

Hogan proposes $461M for roads

Shoulders to be converted to lanes on I-695; other projects planned

By Erin Cox
The Baltimore Sun

Gov. Larry Hogan announced Tuesday that the state will spend $461 million to ease congestion on the northern rim of the Baltimore Beltway.

The plan would convert 19 miles of the interior shoulders in both directions on Interstate 695 into new travel lanes between I-70 and Parkville, a move state officials said would cut about 15 minutes off rush hour delays that can stretch an hour or more.

Hogan's plan would also nearly double the length of the northbound express toll ways on I-95 — extending them from White Marsh to Route 24 in Bel Air — to speed traffic along, and rebuild the aging interchange at I-70 and I-695 to mitigate a daily bottleneck there.

Commuters would see stoplights at on-ramps to help manage traffic flow. Five bridges would be rebuilt, and four new sound walls would be installed.

Construction would begin no earlier than late summer 2018, state officials said.

Hogan, who announced the plan at State Highway Administration headquarters in Hanover, described it as part of an ongoing effort to improve the state's road infrastructure.

He said the Baltimore plan "will benefit the daily lives of millions of drivers throughout the Baltimore region."

See **ROADWAYS,** *page 13*

Officer argues his crimes weren't robberies

Lawyer for gun task force member says that his client only committed thefts

By Justin Fenton
The Baltimore Sun

The attorney for a detective charged in the Baltimore Police Gun Trace Task Force racketeering case hopes to convince a jury that his client took money from people under legal circumstances and that pocketing the money is a lesser crime than the robbery and extortion charges he is facing.

The argument came at a motions hearing for the three officers who plan to fight the charges at trial next month. Five other officers have pleaded guilty, while a former Baltimore officer who joined the Philadelphia police force is charged separately.

Former Sgt. Wayne Jenkins and Detectives Daniel Hersl and Marcus Taylor were brought into the courtroom Tuesday afternoon wearing jumpsuits from the local jails where they are being held. Their hands were cuffed behind their backs. All three sported shaved heads.

Hersl's attorney, William Purpura, said his client had probable cause to stop people and used legal authority to take drugs, guns and cash from them. He said his client "readily admits" it was "bad conduct," but it is not the same as robbery and extortion.

"If an officer [then] converts that money for personal use, that is a theft," Purpura told U.S. District Court Judge Catherine Blake.

Under the law, robbery involves taking property from another person either through the use of or threat of violence, while theft is taking that property without violence or threat — think the difference between a mugging and a pickpocket.

Blake at multiple points expressed skepticism of Purpura's theory. If the officers used search warrants to induce consent from targets and take their money for their own purposes, "I'm not sure why that is not extortion," Blake said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Leo Wise said he was "astonished" by the argument.

"Probable cause doesn't give him authority to put money in his pocket," Wise said.

He added that some of the victims will testify that Hersl and the officers lied about the circumstances under which they were stopped or searched.

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SUMMARY OF THE NEWS

OLIVER CONTRERAS/TNS

Calling North Korea responsible

White House Homeland Security Adviser Tom Bossert tells reporters at a briefing that North Korea was directly responsible for the WannaCry ransomware attack that infected hundreds of thousands of computers worldwide in May and that Pyongyang will be held accountable for it. **ARTICLE, NEWS PG 6**

MARYLAND

SHOT DOWN IN FELLS POINT: James Forrester, who worked as a body piercer at the Baltimore Tattoo Museum in Fells Point, stepped outside the shop to call his wife Monday night and was fatally shot in the chest, a fresh casualty in Baltimore's year of homicides. **NEWS PG 2**

TODAY'S WEATHER

CLOUDY AND COOLER

49 HIGH | 27 LOW

Mostly sunny Thursday **SPORTS PG 12**

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